Telegrams from May 1952 concerning Korean War Shootdowns

10/4/98 REDACTED IAW McCAIN BILL (b)(3)

[TFR 178-1]

[handwritten "584"]

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Subject to return within
8 days to the 8th
Directorate of the General
Staff of the Soviet Army.

Enciphered Telegram Entry No. 501817/Sh

Correspondent 3

Sent 7 May 52 1309 hrs Received 8 May 52 0055 hrs

[illeg.] at the 8th Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Army 8 May 52 0110 hrs

BY WIRE
FLASH PRIORITY

To Comrades A.M. VASILEVSKIJ
P.F. ZHIGAREV
Copy to: S.A. KRASOVSKIJ

I am reporting:

1. For the entire period of our units' actions in Korea the following practices were adapted in the accounting of enemy aircraft shootdowns:

For fighter aviation:

a. the report of the pilot who shot down the aircraft, and of the other pilots who participated in the battle;

b. the film, showing the accuracy of the aim-off taken;

c. confirmation of the local Korean authorities (district committees and the police);

d. whenever possible the location of components of the downed aircraft;

For Antiaircraft Artillery:

a. the report of the command staff;

Deciphered 8 May 52 0900 hrs Chernyshov /see next page/
Printed in 8 copies

1. to the files of the 8th Dte. 5. to Comrade Malandin
2. to Comrade Vasilevskij 6. to Comrade Zhigarev
3. to Comrade Sokolovskij 7. to Comrade Belov
4. to Comrade Shtamenko 8. to Comrade Vatipkij

Deputy Chief, 4th Department, 8th Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Army [illeg. signature]

[TFR 178-2]

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Continuation of ENCIPHERED TELEGRAM No. 501817/Sh

b. confirmation of the local authorities;

c. existence of components of the downed aircraft.

In addition to the stated material, radio intercept data is used.

2. For the period from 1 Jan 52 through 20 Apr 52, based on the aforementioned documents, the corps' air units reported that 136 F-86 fighters had been shot down.

(RANK) (NAME), a captured pilot of the 4th Air Group shot down 21 Apr 52 in aerial combat, has said that for the year 1952 the 4th Air Group, composed of the 334th, 335th and 336th squadrons, lost between 18 and 20 F-86 aircraft.

If that is taken as the truth and you assume that the 51st Air Group, with only two squadrons (the 25th and the 16th) taking part in combat, lost as many aircraft [as the 4th Air Group] then it follows that our units have overestimated by more than three times the number of enemy F-86s lost.

In a few other instances, the testimony of prisoners coincides with our information almost completely. According to our reports, ten B-29s and four F-84s were shot down on the 23rd of October. Prisoners have testified that the Americans lost nine or ten B-29s and the enemy openly announced the loss of the four F-84s by radio.

3. In April, according to the antiaircraft artillery command staff, the roving batteries (each of the three groups has two batteries of small caliber antiaircraft artillery - MZA) shot down 21 enemy aircraft. This was while working from fire positions along the southern [portion of the] SIGISYU-ANSYU highway and along the railroad at a distance of 1.5 to 2 km from Korea Bay.

[TFR 178-3]

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Local Korean authorities confirm that all of the aircraft which were shot down fell into the bay. Parts were removed from only one aircraft, which went down 200 meters of shore.

By my count, only one downed aircraft can be confirmed. This caused dissatisfaction among some of the personnel of these batteries and among the antiaircraft artillery command staff.

4. Corps Aviation conducts combat operations above a territory of some 10,000 square kilometers, above a mountainous, sparsely populated terrain with few roads.

The majority of aircraft which are shot down undoubtedly fall into the bay, since American pilots use the slightest opportunity to guide their aircraft there.

Chinese and Korean authorities hardly report on American aircraft which fall on the territory of Korea.

We cannot establish posts in the indicated region of the sea. Besides that, at certain times and in various regions, search teams are not sent out [due to]: passage of international commissions; airdrops of sabotage groups by the enemy, whose mission is to capture Soviet servicemen; areas of activity of Syngman Rhee bands; areas with completely impassable roads, etc.

On the average, up to 70 Soviet servicemen participate daily in our search groups.

Search-group expeditions to remote regions and especially near the coast are under constant threat of being captured by American and Syngman Rhee spies because we are simply unable to send out large groups.

[TFR 178-4]

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To date we have not found the lost MIG-15bis No. 0715352 and the flier, Captain LARIONOV, nor have we found Senior Lieutenant Filimonov, although his aircraft and ejection seat were found.

5. The S-13 gun-camera cannot give accurate readings as to whether or not an enemy aircraft has been shot down due to the following reasons: not enough frames [are shot] during the first burst of firing.

When firing 2-3-round bursts from the N-37 cannon, the gun-camera did not take a single frame.

When firing 8-10-round bursts from the N-37 cannon, the gun-camera took three to four frames.

There were several instances when fliers engaged in aerial combat shot down enemy aircraft and brought back material evidence of the downed aircraft on the surfaces and in the fuselages of their own aircraft, such as cartridges and fragments of the enemy aircraft. However, the target was not on the [gun-camera] film.

During aircraft descent from high altitudes the protective glass and the lens collect mist, which results in a poor target image on the film or the target not being depicted on the film at all.

The gun-camera is very poorly fastened to the MIG-15 aircraft. During volley fire from all cannons, as a result of aircraft vibration from the firing, the photograph ends up being poorly focused. This is especially true at high speeds.

Besides this, the S-13 gun-camera is inconvenient and difficult to aim during registration/ranging fire. On the MIG-15 aircraft there is no method for setting and winding the clock mechanism;

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I checked the quality of the FP [gun-camera] clock. It runs poorly and stops often. After the cannons are fired two to three times, the clock face crumbles.

Warming up the gun-camera does not ensure normal operation when the surrounding air temperature is subzero. It is impossible to check the warm-up function under field conditions.

The focus of the lens aperture setting is unreliable. In flight, as a result of engine vibrations or vibrations caused by the cannons, the aperture changes spontaneously.

The S-13 gun-camera does not take the speed of the enemy aircraft into consideration. Furthermore, even if the film in the gun-camera does record damage to an enemy aircraft, recording at best a direct hit to the aircraft; the damaged aircraft still might be able to fly away, regardless of the great effectiveness of our weapons.

Antiaircraft artillery has no means other than visual observation to determine whether or not a plane has been shot down.

Antiaircraft artillery operations in coastal regions will unavoidably result in aircraft crashing into the sea.

6. The situation that I reported in paragraph 2 is dangerous not only because units may exaggerate enemy losses. It's dangerous primarily because it might lead to an underestimation of the enemy and an overestimation of our equipment, tactics and forces. It might lead to incorrect conclusions during preparation for a big war.

7. I have turned to the air adviser in Korea, Comrade Petrachev, several times with a request

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to instruct the local authorities through the Korean Embassy about issuing confirmations on downed aircraft when the crash of the aircraft has been confirmed.

I have been assured that such instructions have been given.

The facts stated in paragraph 1 force one to doubt the accuracy of the confirmations that have been received.

8. I request the following:

a. Achieve, through our advisers in Korea, a situation where downed enemy-aircraft confirmations correspond to reality;

b. Accelerate the production of a motion-picture gun-camera that would accurately record the results of a hit, as I requested in my [correspondence] No. 1235/K dated 19 December 1951.

c. Issue instructions on the correct procedure for computing the number of downed aircraft for coastal antiaircraft artillery and fighter aviation units.

d. Take measures to establish the actual enemy losses through other sources.

e. We will take measures to establish the number of losses in individual enemy units through prisoner interrogations and more thorough searches for downed aircraft, but our resources in this area are limited by a number of circumstances.

LOBOV.

No. 634/K
7 May 52

Prepared by Poklonova 1145 hrs 8 May 52 /19/.

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